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## Rep. Henry Waxman, Ferocious Liberal, Says He Will Retire

by LIZ HALLORAN

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All Things Considered

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Rep. Henry Waxman, (D-Calif.), a key architect of the Affordable Care Act and for four decades a ferocious liberal voice on matters of health and the environment, revealed Thursday that he plans to retire at the end of the year.

Waxman's news comes on the heels of a similar announcement from another liberal California "Watergate baby" elected in 1974, Rep. George Miller. Both are top allies of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, also of California.

"Forty years have gone by very quickly. I have a great deal of satisfaction in our legislative accomplishments," Waxman, 74, said in an interview with *The Washington Post*.

Waxman, who becomes one of more than 30 current members of the House who don't plan to return, told *The New York Times* that legislative gridlock on Capitol Hill contributed to his decision.

"It's been frustrating because of the extremism of Tea Party Republicans," he said. "Nothing seems to be happening."

He'll leave with the health care legislation he helped write struggling to stabilize following dramatic rollout problems. But his legacy is chock-a-block with legislative accomplishments: from helping to write the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments that tackled acid rain-causing power plant emissions, to taking on the tobacco industry and its marketing practices.

As chairman from 2007-2009 of the principal investigative committee in the House, the Oversight and Government Reform panel, he directed inquiries that included those into waste and fraud in government contracting, and into the high cost of prescription drugs.

Waxman, who once headed the West Los Angeles Democratic machine and wrote *"The Waxman Report: How Congress Really Works,"* exercised his political skills in 2008 when he used a secret ballot to oust fellow Democratic Rep. John Dingell of Michigan as chairman of the powerful Committee on Energy and Commerce.

As NPR's Julie Rovner reported at the time, Waxman had spent 16 years heading the Commerce panel's Health and Environment subcommittee. "There," Rovner said, "the more liberal Waxman tangled with Dingell over clean air and other environmental legislation."

But they worked together on health issues, and that partnership, Sara Rosenbaum of George Washington University said at the time, resulted in "accomplishments on behalf of working poor families and children and pregnant women and people with disabilities and the frail elderly."

During the 1980s and 1990s, Waxman managed to use budget-cutting bills to expand coverage for many of the poorest Americans. Rosenbaum says that by making the changes bit by bit over a period of years, the eventual accomplishment was large indeed.

"Congressman Waxman, with the great leadership and support of

Congressman Dingell, made it possible for an additional 15 to 20 million children to be covered by Medicaid," Rosenbaum said.

As chairman of the health and environment subcommittee, the diminutive Waxman presided over ground-breaking hearings that featured tobacco company CEOs. The efforts he led resulted in the Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act that, among its provisions, required stronger tobacco warning labels, as well as restrictions on how tobacco companies could advertise and market their products.

His push for smoke-free workplaces and public areas failed, but it presaged successful efforts that would come later.

He also sponsored the Ryan White Care Act that directs federal money toward the treatment of HIV and AIDS.

Waxman's wealthy California district includes Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and Malibu, and is considered safely Democratic.

As he prepared to leave at the end of the session, Waxman told the *Times*: "I'm proud of the Affordable Care Act. I think it's a terrific piece of legislation."

And he gave this response to the *Post* when asked about the secret to effective legislation: "You outlast [the opposition]. You keep working. You keep looking for combinations."

"Everything I ever passed into law, with one exception, had bipartisan support," he added. The exception? The Affordable Care Act.

**rep. henry waxman**

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